

(2)

BW.47

BW.47



22101268089

x 4307

# SECTIONAL INDEX

PAGE

Medicine in  
Antient Erin 9

Medical  
Knowledge,  
Laws and  
Regulations  
in the Celtic  
Period 22

Medical  
Education in  
Celtic Times 27

Disease  
in Celtic  
Times 33

Medical  
and Surgical  
Treatment in  
Celtic Times 41

Antient Irish  
Medical  
Manuscripts 49

St. Patrick 59

The Shamrock 61

Historical  
Medical  
Equipments 69

'Tabloid'  
Medical  
Equipments 85

Formulary of  
B. W. & Co.  
Products 105

'Soloid'  
Brand  
Products 135

'Tabloid'  
Brand  
Products 143

'Wellcome'  
Brand  
Products 187

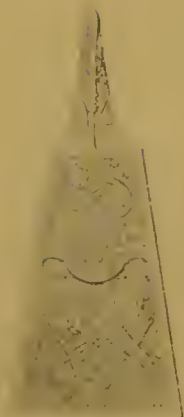


Fig. 1. Bell of St. Patrick



# MEDICINE IN ANTIENT ERIN

AN HISTORICAL SKETCH  
FROM  
CELTIC TO MEDIÆVAL TIMES

LECTURE MEMORANDA  
Canadian Medical Association  
WINNIPEG  
1909

BURROUGHS WELLCOME & CO.  
LONDON (ENG.)

*Branches:* NEW YORK SYDNEY CAPE TOWN  
SHANGHAI  
AND

101-104, CORISTINE BUILDING  
ST. NICHOLAS AND ST. PAUL STS., MONTREAL

5410

(2)

R.W. 47





	PAGE
Analysis Cases, 'Soloid' Brand ... ..	99
<del>Antidote Case, 'Tabloid' Brand ... ..</del>	<del>99</del>
Antient Erin, Medicine in ... ..	9
Antient Irish Medical Manuscripts ... ..	49
<del>Bacteriological Case, 'Soloid' Brand ... ..</del>	<del>101</del>
Baths, Medicated ... ..	41
<del>Chemicals, 'Wellecome' Brand ... ..</del>	<del>187</del>
Celtic Esculapius ... ..	10
Celtic Anatomy ... ..	15
Celtic Colonisers of Erin ... ..	9
Celtic Leech and his rank ... ..	23
Celtic Midwifery ... ..	42
Celtic Period, Medical Knowledge and Regulations in the	22
Celtic Physician's diagnosis ... ..	21
Celtic Physicians, The learning of ... ..	22
Celtic Relieving Officer ... ..	25
Celtic Surgery ... ..	18
Celtic Sweating-house ... ..	45
Celtic Times, Cupping in ... ..	43
Celtic Times, Medical and Surgical Treatment in ... ..	41
Celtic Times, Treatment of Wounds and Fractures in ... ..	42
Celtic Times, Trepanning practised in ... ..	42
"Crimson Branch, The House of the" ... ..	17
<del>Cycle, Carriage, etc., Chests and Cases, 'Tabloid' Brand ... ..</del>	<del>92</del>
Diancecht a Druid ... ..	10
"Diancecht's Porridge" ... ..	43
Diancecht's Skill as an Army Surgeon ... ..	11
Diseases, Celtic Names of ... ..	35
Diseases in Celtic Times ... ..	33
Doctors poison their enemies' wounds ... ..	20
<del>Dressings, Pleated Compressed, 'Tabloid' Brand ... ..</del>	<del>107</del>
Druids skilled in Hypnotism ... ..	11
Earliest Celtic Physicians ... ..	9
Early Celtic Leeches... ..	22
Early Irish Physicians, Classical Knowledge of ... ..	51
<del>'Elixoid' Products ... ..</del>	<del>110</del>
<del>'Ernutin' Products ... ..</del>	<del>113</del>
Fees, Laws regulating ... ..	23
Fees, Scale of... ..	24
"Fer-bolg" ... ..	21
<del>First Aid, 'Tabloid' Brand... ..</del>	<del>102</del>
<del>Formulary of B. W. &amp; Co. Products ... ..</del>	<del>105</del>

	PAGE
"Furious Death" The	37
'Hazeline' Preparations	113
Healing Art in Ireland, Antiquity of the	22
"Healing Stones"	45
Hereditary Physicians in India	31
Hereditary Physicians in Scotland	31
Hereditary Physicians, The Books of the	51
Historical Medical Equipments	69
Hospitals, Early	46
Hypodermic Apparatus	114
Hypodermic Pocket-Cases, 'Tabloid' Brand	85
Hypodermic Products, 'Tabloid' Brand	115
'Kcpler' Products	120
Leprosy in Ireland	40
"Lcs"	21
MacAnlega, The Book of	55
Magic and Charms	57
Magic Bath of Healing	15
Medical Apprentices	27
Medicine in Ancient Erin	9
Medicine Pocket-Cases, 'Tabloid' Brand	89
Nuada's Silver Hand	13
O'Hickeys, The Book of the	53
O'Lees, The Book of the	53
Ophthalmic Pocket-Cases, 'Tabloid' Brand	88
Ophthalmic Products, 'Soloid' Brand	125
Ophthalmic Products, 'Tabloid' Brand	123
O'Shiels, The Book of the	53
Pastilles, 'Tabloid' Brand	126
Photographic Products, 'Tabloid' Brand	127
Plague in Ireland, Early visitation of	37
Plague supposed to be caused by Demons	39
Recipes, Curious Celtic	55
Royal Physician	21
St. Patrick	59
Sanitary Towels, Pleated Compressed, 'Tabloid' Brand	131
Sera, 'Wellcome' Brand	132
'Soloid' Brand Products	135
Suppositories, 'Enule' Brand	111
'Tabloid' Brand Products	143
'Tabloid' Medical Equipments	85
The Shamrock	61
Toothache, Celtic charm for	58
Trosdale, a famous Druid	17
Unqualified Practice	24
'Valoid' Brand Products	182
'Valule' Brand Products	182
'Vaporole' Brand Products	183
'Wellcome' Brand Products	187



## FOREWORD

FOR many years I have been engaged in researches respecting the early methods employed in the healing arts, amongst both civilised and uncivilised peoples. It has been my object, in particular, to trace the origin of the use of remedial agents. Why were certain substances used in the treatment of various diseases? Was their adoption the result of study and practical observation, or was it more usually the result of accident? Were the alleged virtues purely imaginary and due to some superstitious suggestion? A consideration of such questions is always of interest, and sometimes adds to our knowledge.

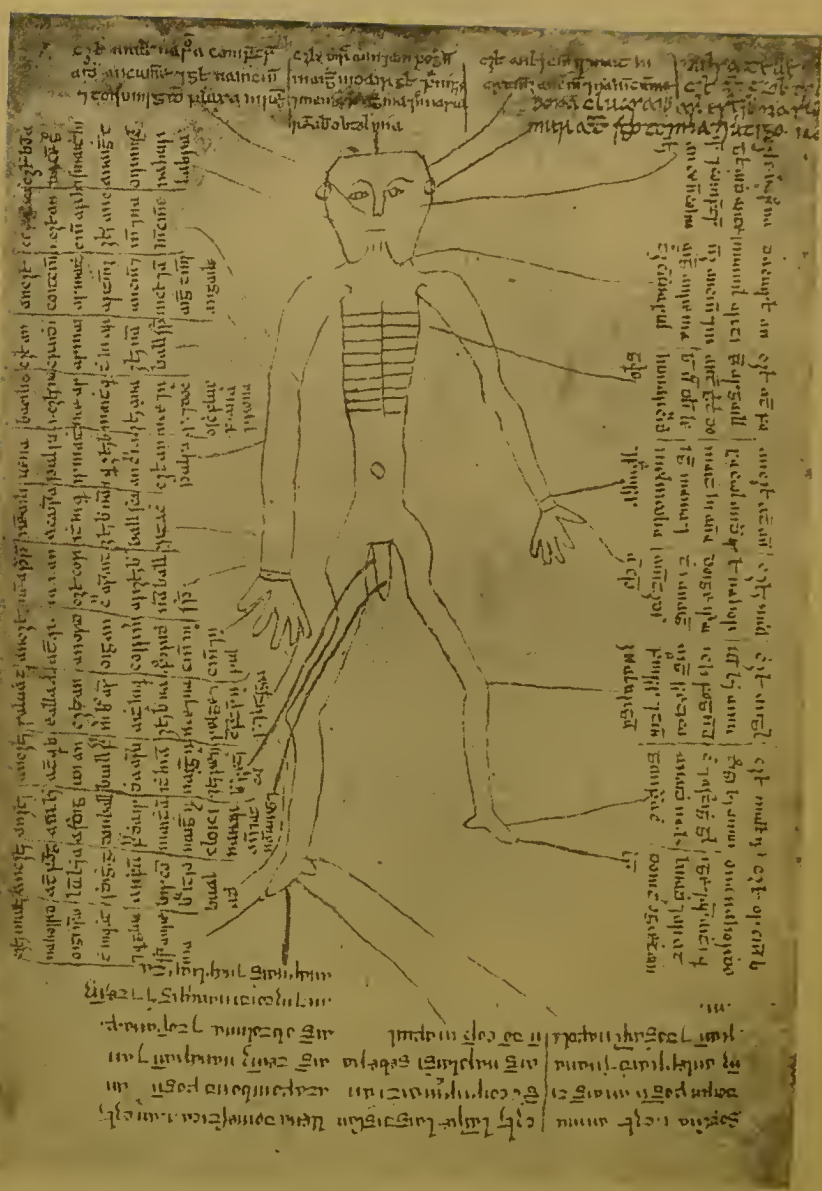
There is a considerable amount of information scattered throughout the world in folk-lore, early manuscripts and printed books, but the difficulties of tracing out and sifting the evidence are considerable. I anticipate that the Historical Exhibition of medical, chemical and pharmaceutical objects which I am organising, to be held in London (Eng.), will lead to the revealing of many facts, and the elucidation of many obscure points, in connection with the origins of various medicines.

I should greatly value any information sent me in regard to medical traditions or references to antient treatment in manuscripts, printed works, etc.: even though the items be ever so small, they may form important connecting links in the chain of historical evidence.

It is my intention ultimately to place before the profession, in a collected form, all the information I obtain.

HENRY S. WELLCOME

Thanks are due to the Council of the Royal Irish Academy, to Colonel W. G. Wood-Martin, A.D.C., and to Dr. P. W. Joyce, for kind permission to reproduce the illustrations on pages 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 57 and 58.



# PHLEBOTOMICAL CHART

Or diagram in form of a man, showing veins which may be opened. At the end of each line is a short description of the particular vein, with its virtues, beginning as follows: "[Letting of] the vein in the tip of the nose helpeth the memory and disease of the brain and prevents effusion of rheum."

From an Irish MS., A.D. 1563



## MEDICINE IN ANTIENT ERIN

It has been shown from comparative philology that the Celts, and kindred races who were the earliest colonisers in antient Ireland, originally came from the East. Sweeping like a wave across Greece and Gaul, they eventually settled in parts of Ireland, the Scottish Highlands, and in Wales. They brought with them their arts, laws and customs, the Brehon, or old Celtic laws, which were formed centuries before the Christian Era, being the most antient code in Europe. These peoples, the Fomorians, the Nemedians, the Tuatha De Danaans, the Firbolgs, and the Milesians, who came under the leadership of Partholan, were all races derived from one Celtic stock, and spoke the same language. The Milesians were the last of the races to invade Ireland, and from them the chief traditions of antient Erin are traced.

Celtic  
colonisers  
of Erin

It is evidenced from these early traditions that medicine and surgery were carefully studied and cultivated in antient Ireland to a remarkable degree.

Like the Greeks and other races of antiquity, the Irish had their great traditional physicians. Macferbis, in his Book of Genealogy, which was compiled in the seventeenth century from early Celtic records now lost, states: —

Earliest  
Celtic  
physicians

“Thus sayeth the antient authority:

“The first doctor that was ever in Erin was Capa;

“For the healing of the sick in his time was all-powerful;

“Eaba,\* the female physician who accompanied the lady Ceasir into Erin, was the second doctor ;

“Slanga, the son of Partholan, was the third doctor (who came into Erin with Partholan) ;

“Fergua, the grandson of Crithinbel, was the fourth doctor (who came into Erin with Nemed).”

The doctors of the Firbolgs were Dubdha. Dubhlosach, Cudan, Corinehisnech, Tingin, Fiswchida, Mianc, the son of Gressach, Aongus and Anternmach.

The doctors of the Tuatha De Danaans were Dianeecht, Airmedh, Miaeh, etc.

Dianeecht, the only one of these traditional physicians of whom we have a fuller record, may be regarded as the Celtic Æsculapius. He is mentioned by The Celtic Æsculapius Cormac MacCuilleanain, A.D. 831-903, and also in some MSS. of the eighth century. His name signifies the “vehement power,” and wonderful stories are related of his skill. Tradition states that he had a son called Miach, and a daughter named Airmedh, both of whom are said to have, in some respects, excelled him in skill.

Among the early Irish, as in all the Celtic nations, the Druids were the priests, physicians and seers. Their doctrines and knowledge were handed down by oral tradition from remote antiquity and preserved with great secrecy, so that the people might be more strongly impressed with a mysterious awe for their wisdom and power.

It is probable, therefore, that Dianeecht, the famous leech of “vehement power,” was a Druid of profound knowledge.

Dianeecht  
a Druid

According to an ancient chronicler, “These leeches were well versed in the book of Nature, and were acquainted with many marvels of natural magic and the properties of many herbs, and

---

\* Eaba is the first “lady physician” of whom we have mention in Celtic history. She is supposed to have landed and practised in Erin about 2000 B.C.

were students of astrology, and learned in the matter of omens, auguries and exorcisms."

They are said to have practised—

" By force of potent spells and wicked magic,  
And conjurations horrible to hear,  
And set the ministry of hell at work,  
And raise a slaughtered army from the earth,  
And make them live and breathe and fight again."

It is stated that the Tuatha De Danaan's Druids belonged to that early and mysterious body, among whom the so-called magic of the East was shared, and it is even probable that they may have been sufficiently skilled in hypnotism as to be able to induce others to see and hear as their mental superiors desired.

Amongst others, Ciathruath, the Druid leech of Cormac of Cashel, is said to have possessed this gift. To some were attributed very special medicinal and curative powers. For instance, a drink given from the hand of Fion, an early leech, was affirmed to be able to heal any wound or cure any disease.

According to the "Book of Invasions," the antient and rival forces of the Fomorians and Tuatha De Danaans had each a special Druid leech whose duty it was every night to attend to the wounded, that they might be ready for the next day's battle. The earliest authentic record of Diancecht's skill is that mentioned at the battle of Moytura, fought in the county of Sligo, between the Firbolgs and the Tuatha De Danaans, where it is said he prepared a bath of herbs and plants possessing medicinal properties, in the rear of the forces, into which the wounded plunged, and are said to have come out healed, owing to the action of the "Slán Iei," which was regarded as a sovereign remedy for all diseases.

Druids  
skilled in  
hypnotism

Diancecht's  
skill as  
an army  
surgeon

According to the most antient chronicles cited in the "Annals of Clonmacnoise," and in those of the "Four Masters," the first battle of Magh Turedh, or Moytura,





Diancecht dressing the arm of King Nuada after the battle of Magh Turedh, 487 B.C.

which occurred in the year 3273\* Anno Mundi, was fought near the place now known as Cong in the county of Mayo. In that conflict, through which the older Firbolgian rule in Ireland was overthrown by the Scythian or Tuatha De Danaan race, who then carried with them the higher civilisation and arts of the East into the country, the leader of the latter, King Nuada, lost his arm, and the physician, Diancecht, staunched the blood and dressed the wound. It is further stated that Miach, the son of Diancecht, had an artificial hand wrought in silver for the monarch, who afterwards bore the name, so <sup>Nuada's silver hand</sup> long remembered in Irish history, "Nuada of the Silver Hand." "This substitute," says a Gaelic chronicler, "was so exquisitely fashioned, and with such mobility in every joint and finger, as though it was the natural hand."

The miraculous virtues of this silver hand were a fruitful theme for early metrical romance, which, even divested from their fabulous elaboration, leave us with the impression that this early surgical contrivance was really a remarkable mechanical production of great artistic skill.

The chronicler goes on to state that twenty-seven years after, in a conflict generally known as the second battle of Moytura, where "King Nuada of the Silver Hand" fell, and which took place <sup>Diancecht slays his son</sup> in the year 3300† Anno Mundi, Diancecht, jealous of the superior knowledge possessed by his son, slew him. In this battle, which was fought between the Tuatha De Danaans and the Fomorians or Norsemen, who, having taken possession of the Hebrides and the Shetlands, invaded Ireland, the medical skill and art of the Scythian race was again demonstrated.

According to tradition, it was during this fight that Diancecht, who was present with his son and daughter,

\* 487 B. C. † 460 B. C.



Diancecht pronouncing incantations over the great magic bath of healing at the second battle of  
Magh Tureadh



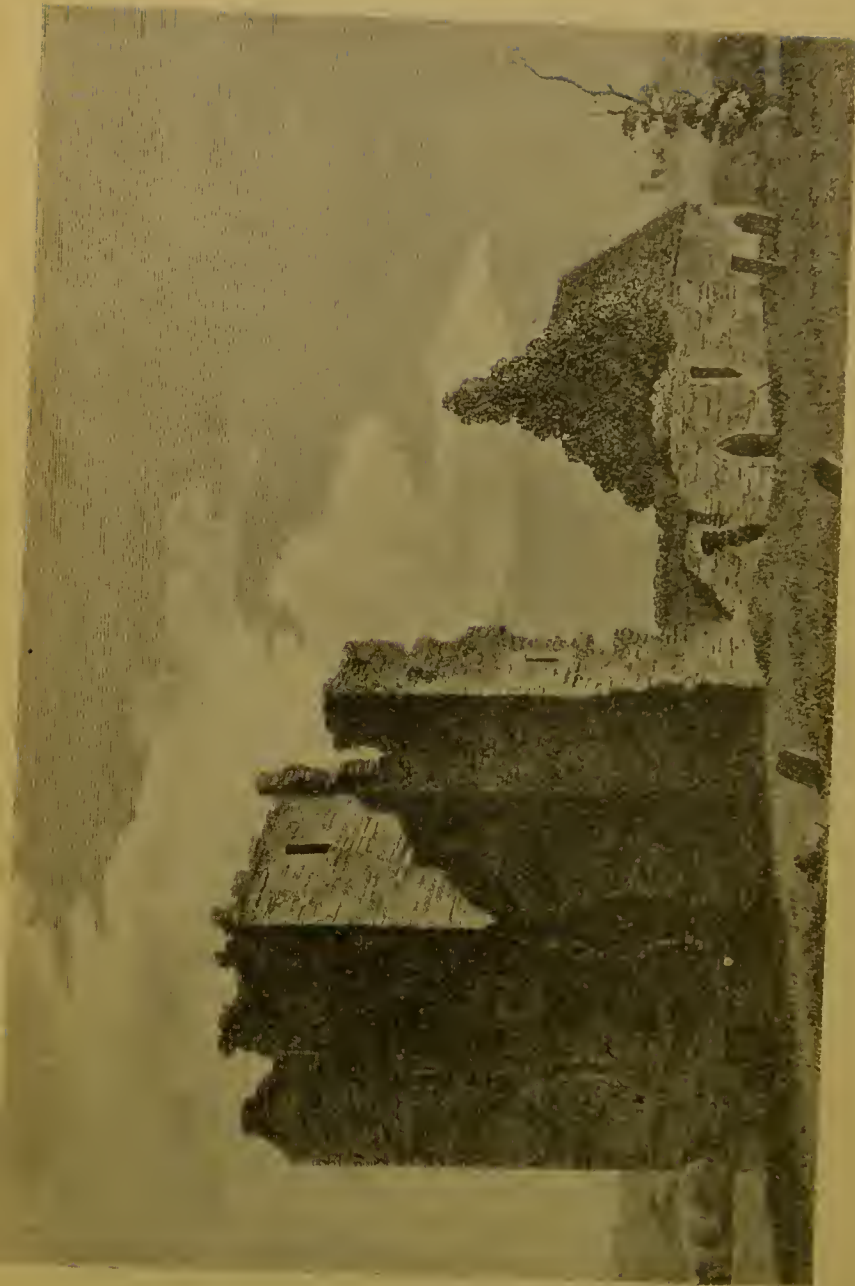
prepared a great healing bath with the principle herbs and plants of Erin, and over it pronounced incantations during the contest. The soldiers who were wounded in the fight were at once plunged into the bath, and are said to have emerged whole, so that they were "able to fight the enemy again and again."

The magic bath of healing

"After a time," continues the legend, "there grew up from Miach's grave three hundred and sixty-five herbs from the three hundred and sixty-five joints and sinews and members of his body, each herb with mighty virtue to cure diseases of the part it grew from. His sister, Airmedh, plucked up the herbs, and carefully sorting them, wrapped them up in her mantle. But jealous old Dianeecht came and mixed them all up, so that now no leech has complete knowledge of their distinctive qualities, unless," quaintly remarks the ehronieler, "the Holy Spirit should teach him." The belief that there were three hundred and sixty-five joints and members in the human body is also mentioned in the old Irish treatise "Na Arrada," which is said to have been written about the eighth century.

Celtic anatomy

Another tradition of great antiquity referring to the art of healing, states that after the Milesian invasion, which immediately succeeded the first appearance of the Piets in Ireland, there is record of a British, or probably a Cymrie, people who, having landed on the south coast of Ireland, violated the tribal customs by poisoning their spears and arrows, in order that the wounds inflicted might prove either mortal or incurable. "On this," says the historian, "Crionthan, Governor of Leinster, applied to his northern allies, the Picts, for assistance as to how he should best meet their treachery. They immediately procured him the Trosdale, one of their most famous Druids, renowned for his skill in physick, who would provide an antidote against the poison." Accordingly, at the next battle, which was fought on the banks of the



VIEW OF TARA CHURCH—COUNTY MEATH

Tara was famous in the history of Antient Erin as the place of royal residence. In early times an assembly was held there every third year, at which all the nobles and scholars of the country met to institute new laws and to examine and correct the National Annals.

Slaney, the Druid is said to have arranged a bath of milk at the rear of the army, into which the wounded soldiers were plunged. Of this Trosdale it is recorded that he could make a bath of the milk of white-faced cows which would render the body of him who bathed in it invulnerable to the wounds of poisoned arrows.

The  
Trosdale,  
a famous  
Druid

Diancecht's teaching was spread abroad by his disciples in a similar manner to that of the Asclepiades of antient Greece. When the palaces of Tara and Emaniah were at the height of their splendour, tradition states, that adjoining the latter was a building called Teagh Na Cracibhe Raudhe, or the "House of the Crimson Branch," where the renowned champions of the court lodged their arms and hung up their trophies. Near to this was the Royal Hospital, called the Broin Bearg, or the "House of Sorrow," where the sick and wounded were lodged and attended with special care.

The "House  
of the  
Crimson  
Branch "

This institution seems to have sprung from a description of knight-errantry, like that which characterised the Hospitallers in later times, and heroes of the "Red Branch" are said by historians to have made a very considerable figure, even in foreign countries, in those days when chivalry was the surest road to fame.

An early  
hospital

Among the trophies which are said to have been exhibited in the hall of the "Red Branch," were balls composed of the brains of distinguished fallen foes, just as the Indian strings the scalps of his enemies to his girdle. Certain mystic powers were attributed to these brain balls, and it happened that one of them was stolen from among the trophies, and, during an engagement which was fought shortly after, was slung with such force at Conner, King of Ulster, that his skull was fractured. The use of compressed cerebral substance in modern medical practice is well known, but its employment as a projectile is probably unique in the annals of warfare. At once,

Fineen Faithaig, one of the King's principal leeches, was sent for, who, upon examining the wound, promised to put his skill into operation provided the nobles in attendance would give their consent to the remedies he might employ. The chronicler goes on to state, that the wound was at length cured by the physician, whose advice to the King was worthy of the most enlightened practitioner of the present day. He recommended him to avoid all exercise that might disorder or ferment his blood, not to ride hard, not to be incontinent, and to keep his spirits cool and in proper motion. Some time afterwards it is stated that Conner, giving way to rage, the wound burst open, some of the blood flowed out, and he died upon the spot.

In the Book of Leinster, written in A.D. 1169, and which was compiled from far earlier sources, another account is given of this curious and interesting legend bearing on early cerebral surgery, which runs as follows:—

“Conner Macnessa, who was King of Ulster at the period of the Incarnation of the Redeemer, having been wounded in the head by a ball from a sling in a conflict at Ardnurach, was carried back to his home, where his physicians resolved not to attempt to extract the ball, but succeeded by palliative treatment in restoring him to health. They, however, strictly enjoined him to avoid for the future, amongst other things, all violent exercises, riding on horseback, or any mental excitement or anger. For many years he followed these directions, and continued in health, until at last, at the time of the Crucifixion of our Lord, observing the solar eclipse and other atmospheric terrors of that awful day, he asked Bacrach, his Druid, what the cause of it was. The Druid consulted his oracles, and answered by informing the King that Christ, the Son of the Living God, was at that moment suffering at the hands of the Jews. ‘What crime has he committed?’ said Conner. ‘None,’ replied the Druid. ‘Then they are slaying him innocently?’ said Conner.

Celtic  
surgery



Conner Macnessa, King of Ulster, hewing the young trees outside his palace in the fit of anger which caused his death.



'They are,' answered the Druid. Then Conner burst into sudden indignation at the words, drew his sword, rushed out to the wood of Laimbraidhc, which was opposite his palace door, where he began to hew down the young trees there, exclaiming, 'Oh! if I were present, it is thus I would cut down the enemies of the innocent man!' His anger began to increase. until at last the fatal ball, which was lodged in his skull. started from its place, followed by the King's brain, and Conner Macnessa fell dead on the spot. This occurrence happened in the fortieth year of his reign; and he has been counted since as the first man who died for the sake of Christ in Ireland."

In the Book of Ballymoate, and more at length in the Book of Lismore, an account is given of the illness of Teige of Mackein, one of the Munster princes, who, with Luigad-Laga, a renowned warrior, undertook to restore his kingdom to Cormac McArt. A battle was fought at Crinna, in Louth, and gained by the adherents of the monarch of Tara, but both the Munster chieftains were badly wounded. They were carried to Tara to be cured, but the doctors of the King of Meath. forgetful of the allegiance due to themselves, and to

Doctors  
poison their  
enemies'  
wounds

their art, were induced, either by Cormac or his attendants, to poison the wounds of the Munster champions. The method by which this was effected, is certainly curious. Small reptiles, portions of poisoned arrows, and an ear of barley, which was probably also poisoned. were secretly placed in the wounds of the invalids. As the poison was intended to work but slowly, an endeavour was made to heal the wounds over the substances placed in them. Luigad is stated to have recovered owing to the circumstance of his wounds having opened afresh, and the poison being ejected during an acrimonious conversation with the King, when he became exceedingly angry. Teige, however. remained sick for a year, until his own medical attendant. Fincen, arrived from Munster with three of his most

celebrated disciples. Upon approaching the house they heard the groans of the wounded man.

"What groan is this?" said the physieian.

"A groan from a barb," answered the first pupil.

"And what groan is this?" said the physician again.

"A groan from a living reptile," the second pupil said.

"And what groan is this?" the physician said a third time.

"A groan from a poisoned dart," said the third pupil.

Thus did the physician of that day make his diagnosis; and the whole scene may be fitly described as the first clinical lecture recorded in the

Emerald Isle. To continue the story: the physician then entered the house with his disciples. They plaeed the coultter of a plough

A Celtic  
physician's  
diagnosis

in the fire, and blew with the smith's bellows until it was red hot. One of the pupils then "made a dart at the wound of Teige, and forth eame the offending bodies." It seems probable that the assistant in reality re-opened the wound with the actual cautery.

Coming to a later period, but still beyond the fringe of authentic history, we find in several authorities record of a tradition that, in the second century before Christ, Josina, the ninth King of Seotland, was educated in Ireland by the native physieians, and that he wrote a treatise on "The Virtues

A royal  
physician

and Powers of Herbs." Whatever credit we may attach to this story, it shows that the physicians of Erin had a reputation for great skill at a very early period.

The medicine bag carried by these early leeches was called "les"; and how general was the custom is indicated by the expression in the "Amra" that a leech without his medicine bag was called a "fer-bolg." This term more generally means a bag for carrying a set of chess-men.

The  
doctor's  
bag

These interesting old legends, which probably are not without some grains of truth, serve to give us some idea of the healing art during the mythological period of Celtie history in Ireland.

## MEDICAL KNOWLEDGE, LAWS AND REGULATIONS IN THE CELTIC PERIOD

It has been said that the practitioners of the healing art in Ireland are the legitimate heirs of what may be termed the oldest professional culture of which there is record in the living language of any European nation. "It might be proved, by incontrovertible evidence, that when the lamp of medical knowledge was yet unkindled in most other countries, its light shone with comparative brilliance in Ireland. There is still extant a considerable number of antient manuscripts, in many of which the distinguished history and high character of early Celtic medicine are well illustrated. Even the references in the oldest Gaelic MSS. to the medical practices of nearly 2000 years ago are not altogether unworthy of consideration from the legendary or mythical form in which they have reached us. That form was as inevitable in these as in other records of similar antiquity, *e.g.* the Homeric poems. For in Celtic Ireland, as in antient Greece, such narratives were originally transmitted orally in poetic garb, through countless generations, until in distant ages they were evidently committed to writing, and thus preserved in those now time-worn folios in which can still be traced, however dimly, the medical art and usages, as well as the social life and history, of our remote ancestors."

From this source it can be gathered that from the oldest period of authentic Irish history, the classic literature of Greek and Roman medicine was cultivated; therapeutics, materia medica and anatomy studied; and surgery, gynæcology and obstetrics practised in Ireland, where the professors of the healing art were then held in high honour. Further, there is clear evidence to show that the employment of anæsthetics, and even the alleged marvels of modern hypnotism, were.

Antiquity  
of the  
healing art  
in Ireland

Early  
Celtic  
leeches

The learn-  
ing of the  
Celtic  
physicians



although in cruder forms, anticipated by the antient Celtic physicians.

From numerous instances recorded by chroniclers, from the introduction of Christianity in the fifth century to about the end of the fourteenth century, some idea may be gathered of the medical practitioners of that period.

The "Liaig," or Leea (radically the same as the old English leech), as the physician was called, ranked with the higher craftsmen and the workers in the precious metals, and he belonged to the Ollaves, or the highest order of their <sup>The Celtic leech, and his rank</sup>partieu-lar caste. He also had equal rank with the Aireach Ard, who was a landowner, having twenty lieges or retainers under him, ten of whom paid him tribute without refection.

The "Book of Glendalough" states that the physician had a separate seat assigned to him at the royal banqueting table in that famed locality. According to the Brehon laws, he was entitled to his food, and that of four of his pupils, at the house of his patient while the latter was being healed, but at the cost of the transgressor if the wounds were caused maliciously. Should, however, the wounds break open within a certain time, he was obliged to refund his fees, and these were to be given to a better physician who was able to keep the wound healed beyond the time prescribed by the test. This test was a year for a wound of the hand or arm, a year and a quarter for one <sup>Laws regulating fees</sup>on the leg, and three years for the perfect cure of a wound on the head. After this period neither the man who inflicted the wounds, nor the doctor who cured them, was held responsible for any after consequences which might result.

Camden says, in describing the Irish nobles: "They have also their historians, physicians, bards, poets, each of which have lands assigned to them, and each of these professions in every territory form distinct families, as the Brehons of one lineage and name, the historians of

another, and so of the rest, who each bring up their children in their respective arts."

The services of the leech were evidently much appreciated by the Celts, and it was by no means uncommon for the tribe to make a grant of land to the physician, so that, in the words of the Brehon Code, he "might be preserved from being disturbed by the cares and anxieties of life, and enabled to devote himself to the study and work of his profession."

A distinction is drawn in the Brehon Code between the "lawful" and "unlawful" physician; it being stated that, "If an unlawful physician remove a joint or sinew without obtaining an indemnity against liability to damages, and with a notice that he was not a regular physician, he is subject to a penalty with compensation to the patient." The laws against quacks were even more drastic among the early Irish than at the present day.

If a man was maliciously or accidentally wounded, he was removed to the house of a leech, who examined his wounds, and gave certificates as to their character, upon which depended the legal liabilities of the person who had inflicted the wounds. If the leech thought he could cure the wounded man, he gave security for his

proper treatment; and in return received security for his fees; these varied with the rank of the patient. For healing a bishop, the leech was entitled to receive forty-two cows, and so downwards through various grades to the "houseless, homeless man, the houseboy, or slave," for whom the leech's fee was reduced to "two cows."

Of every cow killed for his chieftain's family the kidneys were assigned to the "physician," and of every sheep, the shoulders to the astronomer.

Celtic physicians appreciated the value of cleanliness, pure water, and free ventilation in the treatment of the sick and wounded.

The doctor's house, under the provisions of the Brehon laws, was the appointed place where the

Unqualified  
practice

Scale of  
fees

The  
physician's  
house con-  
sidered a  
hospital

sick were to be treated; and, as a matter of fact, until the fifteenth century, wounded men, including the chiefs of Septs or tribes, were frequently taken to be healed of their wounds in the house of a physician. These houses were ordered to be built either on the bank of a running stream, or with such a stream passing through the precincts of the house. The building was to be provided with four doors with the object of allowing all that took place within it to be open to inspection, and further, to permit one door being left open whichever way the wind blew. The hot-air bath was employed for the cure of rheumatism, and shampooing was largely practised.

There is much in the system of medicine as practised by the early Celts of Ireland which connects their ideas and practice with that contained in Sanskrit works on the healing art, and there can be little doubt that the Celts carried with them from their Aryan homes many of the practices of the healing art which are mentioned and embodied in the Brehon laws.

The Celtic relieving officer saw to the relief of the sick poor, and had large powers, for he was entitled to levy a rate in kind on the landowners of the district in which he resided for the maintenance of the "wretched and wandering poor." This officer is described as a "pillar of endurance," a true Celtic idea of a relieving officer; he was further to "suffer a reddening of his face without insult to his tribe"; in other words, he was not to consider himself disgraced because he was abused by beggars. Each tribe was chargeable for the maintenance of its own "sick men and women, and for the keep of those who were incurable." We learn also, "with respect to sick maintenance," that it included the attendance of "a physician, and for providing food, bedding and lodging, and from granting the sick man things prohibited by the physician."

Celtic  
relieving  
officer

Almost every leech took apprentices, who lived in his house, and who learned their art by the teaching



STONE EFFIGY OF ST. BRENDON  
At the antient Cathedral at Ardfert



or lectures of the master. They accompanied him on his professional visits. For this instruction a fee was paid which included their keep, <sup>Medical apprentices</sup> clothing and lodging during the period they were "at their learning." Campion, who wrote in 1571, says of the students: "They speak Latin like a vulgar tongue, learned in their common schooles."

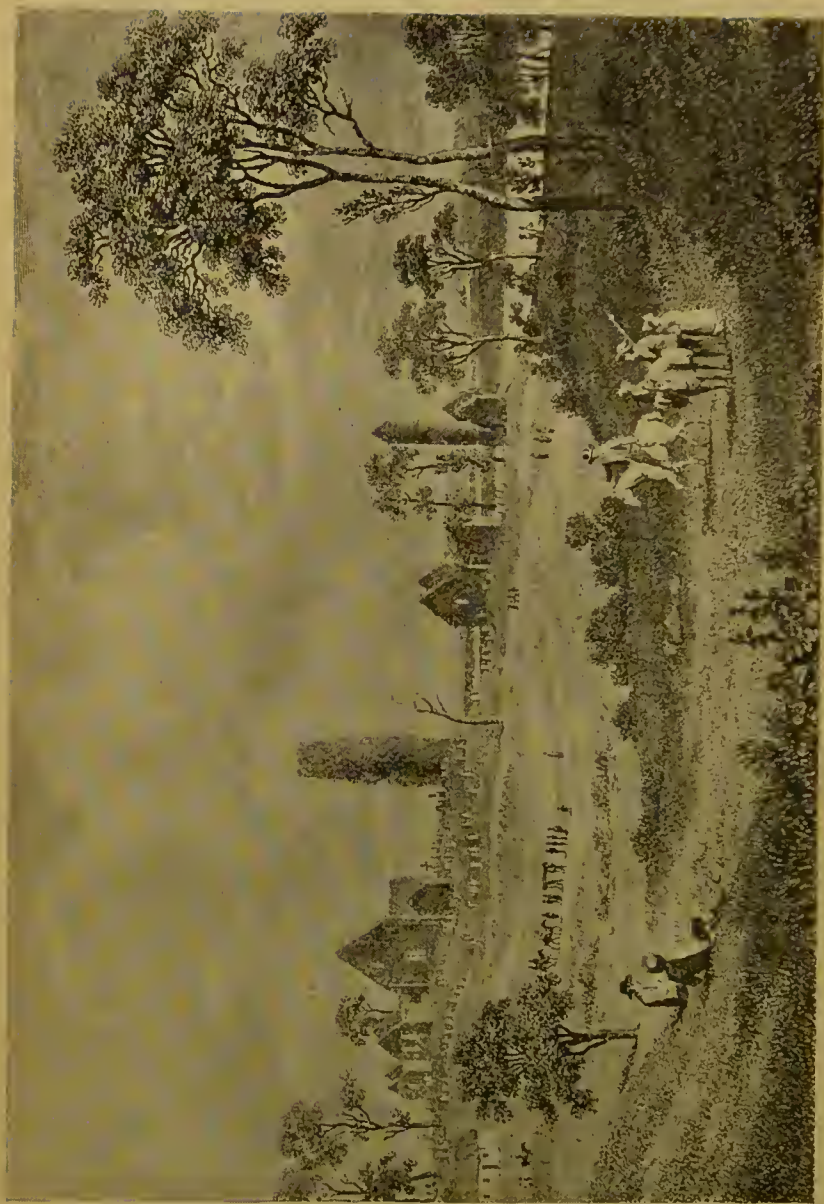
### MEDICAL EDUCATION IN CELTIC TIMES

It seems probable that education was fairly well diffused in Ireland during the Celtic period, and immediately after the introduction of Christianity, several schools of learning were established. Amongst these were Clonard, founded in A.D. 530; Roscarberry, in the same century; and Armagh, founded by St. Patrick. It is quite probable that medicine was taught in many of these schools.

The ruins of many others, such as Clonmacnoise, Cashel, Maelick, Portumna and Monasterboice, still attest the culture and art, as well as the piety, of their founders—one at least is of special interest as of a distinctly medical origin and character, namely, Tuaim Breccain, near the present town of Belturbet. This college, as Dr. Healey, in Bif Clonfert, has shown, was established by a medical practitioner of no little eminence—St. Breccan—whose skill is celebrated in the early Irish annals.

St. Breccan was the son of Findloga, and a disciple of St. Finian at Clonard. He is said to have worked many miracles of healing, and died A.D. 578.

The educational courses and numerous gradations adopted in the Celtic colleges or universities, "grew so intricate and complicated, that in the case of the legal profession, the Brehonship was confined to a few families, who transmitted from generation to generation the key to the interpretation of the written and customary law." So, in like manner, the profession



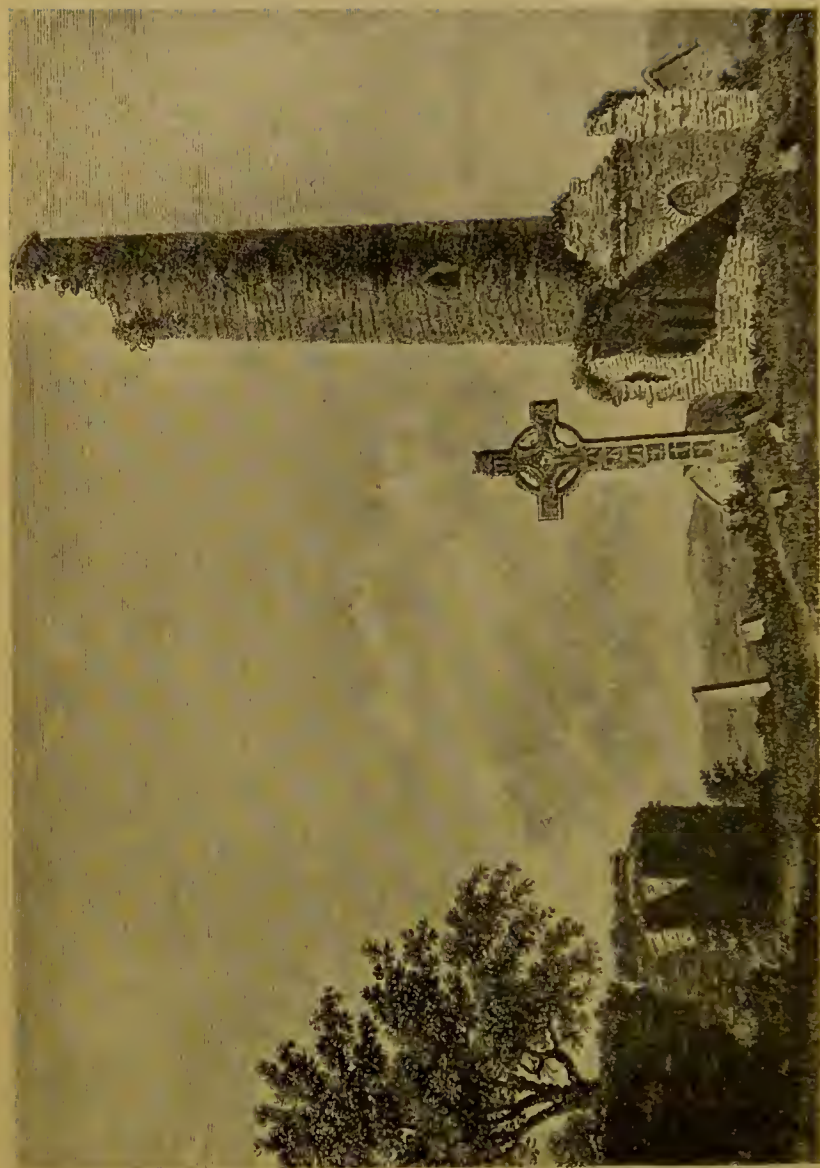
THE RUINS OF CLONMACNOISE

The Abbey of Clonmacnoise was one of the centres of learning in Antient Erin

of medicine then also became hereditary in certain families, whose medical knowledge was largely derived from antient MSS. and tradition. Handed down from father to son, its exclusive possession, in some cases, was recognised as proof of their right to be regarded as the medical attendants of their respective clans. Several of these documents are still extant in the Royal Irish Academy, or elsewhere. Thus, we have the O'Lees, the hereditary physicians of the O'Flahertys of Connaught; the O'Shiels, the elder who died in 1548, the medical attendants of the MacColghans of Devlin; the O'Hickeys, the body physicians to the O'Briens of Thomond; the O'Cassidies, one of whom died in 1322 and another in 1335, the leeches to the Maguires of Fermanagh; the Callanans, to the O'Kennedys; the O'Canavans, to the MacAnleaghass, the four O'Dunleavies, who died in 1395, 1527, 1567 and 1586, respectively; the O'Mearas, the O'Connells; and many others. It is further recorded that certain territories, consisting of five acres, were allotted to these chieftains for the support of their physicians, and many of these lands, it is said, can still be identified. From the name O'Ley or Lye, being a corruption of the Irish word "liaig," signifying doctor or physician, it is probable that the family of this name was amongst the oldest of the hereditary physicians of Ireland.

Medicine  
an  
hereditary  
profession

In a state of society such as prevailed in a country so subjected to constant warfare and repeated predatory invasions as Celtic Ireland, the presence of "one skilled their wounds to heal" was an obvious necessity in the *entourage* of each knight or chieftain. That office was accordingly held in high esteem, and was habitually filled by the head of some one of the families of hereditary physicians, whose social status and emoluments were distinctly defined by the Brehon Code, and who were then freely rewarded by their patrons and patients. Thus, Ballygally Castle was the property of the Neillans, who were hereditary physicians



MONASTERBOICE CHURCH AND TOWER

The Monastery of Monasterboice was one of the seats of learning in Antient Erin



to the royal house of Thomond. Desmond's medical Ollave was assigned a townland, together with a town house in Youghal, for his fee; and, by a deed dated 1673, Lord Courcy granted Rotheric, son of Maclmora in M'Beha. physician, half a townland in Rinrone in the highway called Glanquill, to hold free "with medicinal dignity, liberty and profits," throughout his lordships of Rinrone and Rinsale.

The reputation of these hereditary Irish physicians long outlived that of most of the other professions and arts of the remote period of which this system was the outcome, and was not confined to their own country even in the seventeenth century.

A similar system to that which prevailed in Ireland still exists in some parts of India, where, as Voyse states, the families who claim the right of practising medicine, do so in virtue of their possession of inherited antient MSS., or "shastras." which are jealously guarded by their owners, and not permitted to be sold or copied.

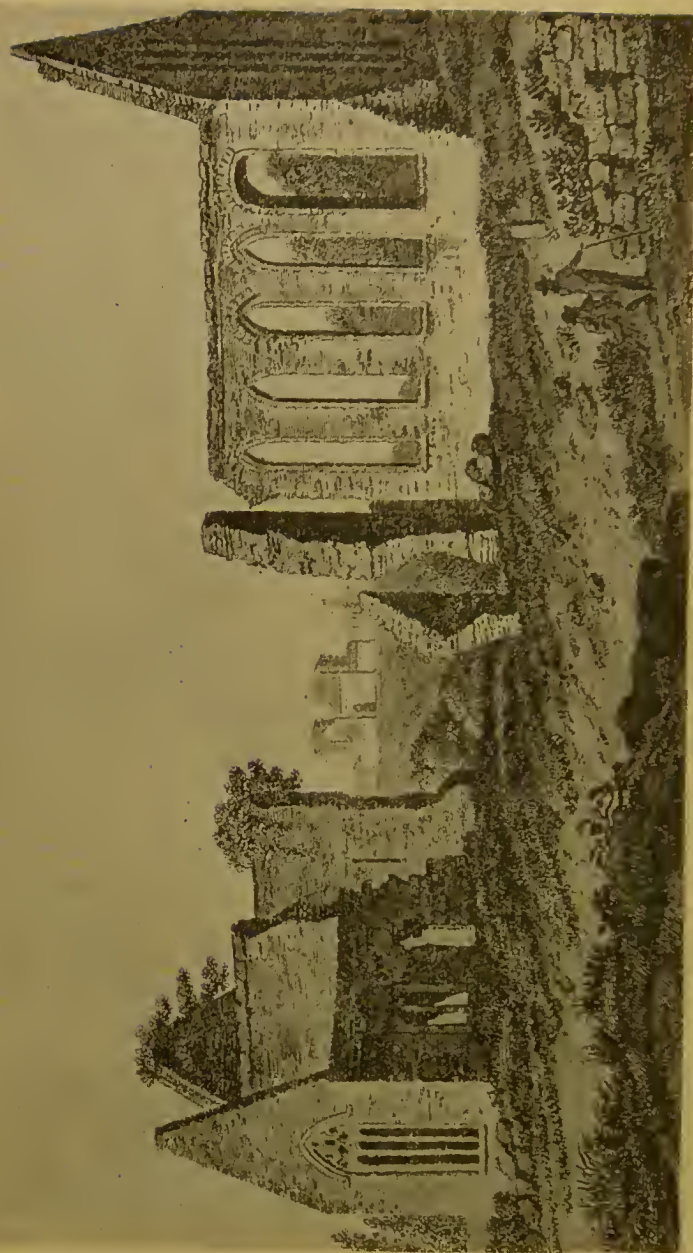
Hereditary  
physicians  
in India

In Scotland also, in Celtic times, the practice of the healing art was in some instances hereditary. Thus, a pulmonary disease called "glachach" was also called "the Macdonalds' disease" in the Highlands, because the gift of curing it was ascribed to certain families of that name.

Hereditary  
Celtic  
physicians  
in Scotland

In Ireland, the last survival of this system exists in the instance of a family named M'Govran, in the parish of Killinagh, in the county of Cavan, where they have long enjoyed a wide reputation as the possessors of a cure for hydrophobia, by a method of treatment which has been handed down from an unknown antiquity, and the secret of which has been carefully preserved in their hands.





THE ABBEY OF CASHEL—COUNTY TIPPERARY

The Abbey of Cashel was one of the seats of learning, where medicine was probably taught, in Antient Erin

DISEASE IN CELTIC TIMES

Nearly all diseases were attributed by the Celtic Irish to what they termed "Meillt-eorcacht," or "fairy strokes," a similar idea to that which prevailed among other primitive races, where disease was believed to be due to evil spirits or demons.

Sir William Wilde, who prepared statistics of disease from the Irish MSS. written in the earliest times, was able to tabulate seventy-five diseases accurately described by the early leeches. "The Irish terms for the principal diseases," he states, "were of far more appropriate significance than those used in English, or derived from the Latin or Greek."

Diseases  
in Celtic  
times

The general names for disease, sickness, or ailment, were *galar* (still used) and sometimes *teidm*. Other words now used are *breoitecht*, *eageruas* and *aicia*. Many of the diseases and epidemics we are now acquainted with were known and studied by the early Irish physicians. Smallpox was known by the name of *bolgoch*, or "pustule disease," and *galar brecc*, the "speckled disease." Consumption was known as *anfobracht*, or *anbobracht*, which, according to Cormac's Glossary, is a person without bracht or "fat," and in the Brehon Code it is termed "one who has no juice or strength." Murkertagh O'Brien, King of Munster, appears to have fallen a victim to this disease, and retired to the monastery of Lismore, where he died. Diseases of the bladder or kidneys were called *galar fuail*, literally "disease of the urine." Gout in the hand is expressed in Irish as *crupan na lam*, and ophthalmia as *galar sula*, "disease of the eye." The word *crupan* is still used in parts of Ireland to describe a paralytic affection in cattle.

There is a record of an early King called Aed Baridnech, or "Aed of the shivering disease," which was probably ague; while palsy was known by the words "*crith*," shaking, and "*lam*," a hand. Epilepsy



**E** cel tens que seinz patrices li granz preel  
choit en yrlan de la parole de deu : nostre sire  
confirma son preelchement : par glorieus mi  
raclis. Seinz patrices troua les genz de cele  
terre ausi sauuaiges a crance com se ce fussent  
bestes. et il mult molo grant peine a els ense  
igner la loi deu.

ST. PATRICK

From an MS. of the XV century



was known as *gular poil*, or "Paul's sickness," from a belief that St. Paul, after one of his visions, had a seizure of this disease. Those suffering from it were called *talmaidheach*, "prone to the earth." There is also a record that in A.D. 653, St. Camin, of Inis Celtra, died in that year of *teine-brurr*, "fire of swelling," St. Anthony's fire, or erysipelas, which "withered away all his body, so that his bones fell asunder when laid in the grave," which points to the fact that ergotism was rife in Ireland as early as the seventh century.

Celtic  
names of  
diseases

According to Zeuss's Glosses of the eighth century, cancer is expressed by two Irish words, *tuthle* and *aílse*, and diarrhoea was called *brunnech*.

In early times, when great plagues were of frequent occurrence all over the world, Ireland was not exempt. A pestilence of any great mortality was denoted by several words, the most usual being "*tam*" or "*tamh*." "*Teidm*" also was often used; but it was always applied to any severe seizure in an individual, such as colic. "Dunebath" is a plague, literally "man death." "Dibath" and "ar" are often used in the same sense, as in "bo-dibath" and "bo-ar," both denoting cattle plague, from "bo," a cow. In later times the old "*plaig*," a plague, was borrowed from the Latin *plaga*. Lastly, a terrible pestilence of any kind was designated by the old word "*scaub*," which means a besom or broom.

Celtic  
words for  
plague

The victims of a plague were commonly buried in one spot, which was fenced round and so preserved as hallowed ground. In Cormac's Glossary it is said that the place of such wholesale interment was called "*tamlachta*" or "*tamlacht*," i.e. "plague ground."

On Tallaght Hill, near Dublin, are still to be seen a number of early graves and burial mounds, in which, according to tradition, a Partholanian colony once settled there, succumbed to plague in the space of a week.



ST. BRIDGET  
Patroness of Erin—A.D. 453-525

St. Bridget shares with St. Patrick the glory of being one of the earliest saints of Erin. She is said to have been brought up by a Druid, who bought her mother as a slave. From her infancy she is said to have performed miracles of healing.

From antient records it appears that Ireland in Celtic times was visited by several severe plagues, and the first of these is said to have destroyed a whole colony of Tuatha De Danaans, at Howth, in the year 1180 B.C. A later visitation was one that was destined to have a considerable influence on the history of the island. In the year 541, about a century after the arrival of St. Patrick, it is recorded that a plague called "blessed" broke out. Among the victims is said to have been a beggar who swore falsely by the hand of St. Kieran, his head being severed from his body by gangrene. This plague again recurred in 544, and was called "*crom chonail*," the yellow mange, or the yellow plague of King Conal. It is said to have lasted for three years, and to have carried off five of the Irish saints. It is described by Adamnanus, who lived in the seventh century. The return of the plague is recorded in the year 554, and again in 576, when it was called "*lepra*." The coincidence of this period with that of the great plague of Justinian, which began in 540, and ravaged Europe for nearly half a century, leaves no doubt of its identity. The plague of Justinian was believed to have destroyed nearly one-third of the human race, but the last visitation of the Irish plague was proportionately of much greater severity, carrying off two-thirds of the population of Ireland.

Early  
visitation  
of plague  
in Ireland

In the *Chronicon Scotorum* it is recorded that in the year 700 the sea was frozen over between Scotland and Ireland, and that famine and pestilence lasted for three years, insomuch that men ate one another. In 946, a remarkable disease, which was called "*readhdibudh*," or "furious death," caused the death of both men and cattle among the Saxons, Celts and Britons. The origin of this disease was ascribed to magic, probably because it was not preceded by inclemency of the weather, or any other cause that might produce it, and there seems

The  
"furious  
death"





ST. PATRICK HEALING THE LEPERS

From an old woodcut



little doubt that it was contagious. Between 992 and 1120, there are five other visitations recorded. During the Anglo-Celtic period, at least two epidemics of dysentery are said to have occurred. One of these ravaged Armagh in the year 1020, after a very hot summer, and the other occurred in the spring of 1035.

During the ninth century the death is recorded of O'Tindrid, who appears to have been an eminent physician of the Celtic period. He was the contemporary of Scotus Erigena, a great literary light of his time.

According to the Book of the Four Masters, A.D. 986, "Druidical or magic sickness was caused by demons in the east of Ireland, which caused mortality of men plainly before people's eyes."

It was a common belief that the plague was due to some malignant demon that roamed the country. Thus, in A.D. 1084, it was recorded that a great pestilence, which killed a fourth of the men in Ireland, began in the South and spread over the land. "The cause of this pestilence," says the chronicler, "was due to demons, which came out of the Northern hills of the world, to wit, three battalions. and in each battalion there were thirty and ten hundred and two thousand, as Oengus Oc, the son of Dagda, related to Gilla Lugan, who used to haunt the fairy mound every year on 'Samain' night. And he himself beheld at Maistin the battalion of them which was destroying Leinster. Even so they were seen of Gilla, Lugan's son; and wherever their heat or fury reached, there their venom was taken. For there was a sword of fire out of the gullet of each of them, and every one of them was as high as the clouds of heaven. So that is the cause of the pestilence."

Plague  
supposed to  
be caused  
by demons

During the fourteenth century Ireland was visited by the "black death," and whole districts were decimated by this terrible scourge.

In the same century, a scrofulous disease of the skin and joints, which was known by the name of "*fiolun*," seems to have been prevalent. This name appears to have been used sometimes to denote scurvy, and sometimes King's Evil.

In the Book of the Four Masters there is also record of a plague called "*cluithe-na-righ*," or the "king's game," but there is no further description of the complaint; while in the Annals of Loch-Ce there is an account of a "bed distemper," which is supposed to have been ague, called "*galar-na-leptae*."

Leprosy seems to have been prevalent in the sixth century, the names "*clam*" and "*brosc*" being in common use for some form of the disease, as well as for the leper. The common word for leprosy is, however, "*lobor*." Judging from the chronicles, leprosy appears to have existed in Ireland from a very early date, but whether it was true leprosy or not, it was impossible to say, until the sixth century, when the disease was described more fully. St. Patrick is said to have healed lepers, and at one time to have given shelter to a leper in his own dwelling; and among the accounts of miracles performed by other saints leprosy is frequently mentioned. An epidemic of influenza is described in an Irish MS. of the fifteenth century under the names of "*fuacht*" and "*sloadhan*."

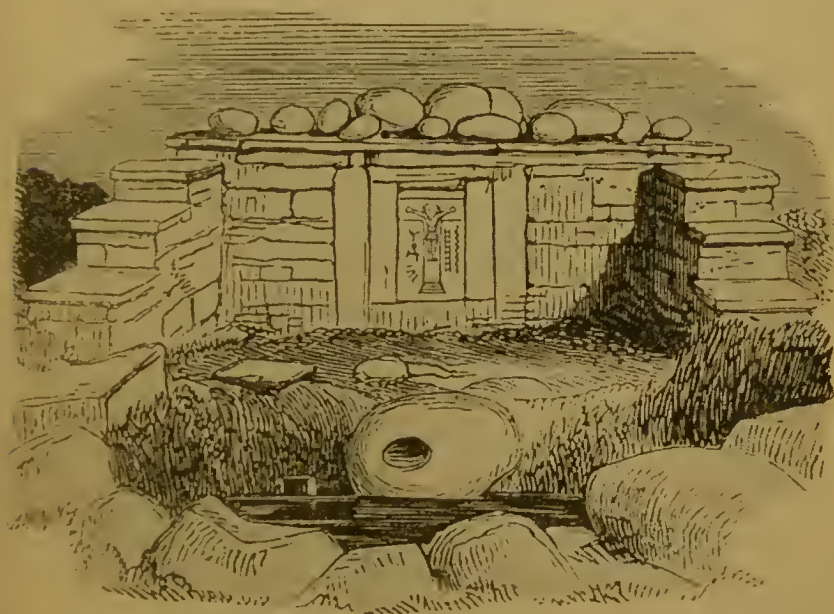
In the story of the battle of Dunbolg, the young warrior, Ron Kerr, having smeared himself all over with the blood of a calf mixed with dough of rye, to look like a leper, went as a spy in this disguise to the enemy's camp. Many other instances are recorded of this disguise, which show that the disease was very common in Erin in early times.



# MEDICAL AND SURGICAL TREATMENT IN CELTIC TIMES

In the earliest records of medical treatment by the leeches of Erin, the medicated bath plays an important part. It was used by Diancecht to heal the wounded at the battle of Moytura, and by the famous Trosdale druid at the battle fought on the banks of the Slaney.

Medicated  
baths



THE BRARAGH, the well of the Virgin St. Athracht or Attracta, near the shore of Lough Salt. Believed to cure those suffering from epilepsy and nervous diseases.

Other baths were used for skin diseases, and Cormac's Glossary mentions the old "*fothrucud*," the bath which, he explains, was used "for bathing sick persons, and it is for lepers it is oftenest practised."

According to the Annals of Tiernach, in the year 366, a princess died in consequence of having swallowed a poisoned draught; which shows at that early period the Irish Celts had a knowledge of poisons. In

Southey's "Morte d'Arthur" allusion is made to Sir Tristram having been wounded by a poisoned spear. He was advised to go to Ireland, the country from whence his antagonist had come, for "there alone the venom could be neutralised." He went to that country, and was placed by King Angnysshe under the care of his daughter, who "was a noble surgeon."

That trepanning was known is evidenced from an account written A.D. 637, in which a young Irish chieftain named Cennfaelad is stated to have had his skull fractured by the blow of a sword, and after twelve months' treatment at the School of Tomregan in county Cavan, was cured. It is said that the "injured portions of the brain and skull were removed, which so cleared his intellect and improved his memory that he became a great scholar." The old Irish legend accounts for the sudden improvement in his condition by stating that his "brain of forgetfulness" was removed.

In the account of the death of King Conobar Macnessa, it is said that the surgeon stitched up the wound with thread of gold, because his hair was gold coloured.

Wounds were usually treated with decoctions or poultices of herbs mixed with honey, similar treatment being applied to broken bones. There is a reference to some form of splint, and amputation is advised for gangrenous limbs, though no details of the method of performance are given. Venesection, cupping, and scarification were evidently practised, an operation for hare-lip is described, and various classes of baths are recommended.

Midwifery, as with the antient nations generally, was of a primitive and superstitious character. To quote a single instance: the bards sing of a certain King Diarmuid, in the seventh century, who had two wives, one of whom was bald, and the other barren. Upon the head of the one, although

Trepanning  
practised  
in Celtic  
times

Treatment  
of wounds  
and  
fractures

Celtic  
midwifery

details are not given, a supply of beautiful hair was induced to grow, and the other became fruitful after the administration of three doses of specially blessed, or, as it is elsewhere termed, medicated water. It is stated that after the first administration, the lady bore a lamb, which was sacrificed as the first fruits of the womb; after the second, a silver salmon was brought forth; and after the third, a son—the famous Aedh. Pregnant women were also sometimes taught to kneel before the “brash” or “bullán” stones, and to pray for their safe deliverance at childbirth.

There is record of the Cæsarean operation being performed on Eithne, the daughter of King Eochaidh Feidlech.

Diancecht is said to have recognised fourteen disorders of the stomach, for which he prescribed mostly vegetable remedies; indeed, one of his first supposed prescriptions, “Diancecht’s porridge,” has been handed down, and is affirmed to be the oldest in the Irish language. It was for the relief of “colds, phlegm, sore-throat, and the presence of evil things in the body, such as worms and the like, and it advised hazel buds, dandelions, chickweed, and wood sorrel to be boiled together with oatmeal, and to be taken morning and evening, when the cold or other trouble will disappear.” He recommended, also, a poultice of yellow baywort to be tied round the neck for “throat-cats,” or sore-throat. White frankincense, beaten up with white wine, he prescribed to restore memory, and “an excellent cordial” was made up with one part gentian and two parts centuary, bruised well together and mixed with water, to drink. Saffron he considered “a most excellent tonic.”

“Dian-  
cecht’s  
porridge”

Cupping was practised by the early Irish leeches, who carried with them for this purpose an iron instrument called a gipne. A case is recorded in the Acallamh, where a physician named Bebinn had the venom drawn from an old

Cupping  
in Celtic  
times



unhealed wound on Cailte's leg by means of two fedans or tubes, by which the wound was healed. It is stated that these were "the fedans of Nudarn's daughter Binn," from which we may infer that they were something more than simple tubes—and were of special construction cunningly designed for the operation.



A SWEATING-HOUSE  
on Inishmurray

Bebinn or Binn was a lady doctor who also treated Cailte by administering five successive emetics, which she prepared by steeping certain herbs in water, which treatment is said to have restored him to health.

The frequent mention of women as practitioners of medicine in antient Erin shows that the practice of the healing art was by no means confined to the sterner sex. In Hammer's Chronicle the following account is given of another cure effected by a lady doctor:—"In the time of Alfred, King of the West Saxons, A.D. 872, as Fabian and Cooper have noted, there was a grievous malady reigning among the people called the 'evil ficus,' which also took the King, so that, say mine authors, an Irish maid came out of Ireland called 'Modwen' (whose monastery in time of rebellion was destroyed) and cured the King."

According to the Brehon laws, the probe and the

whip are mentioned as articles, belonging to a physician, which might be seized in distraint.

Another method of treatment employed by the leeches of Erin was the hot-air bath or sweating-house. The structures in which these baths were given are known by the name of "*tigh nalluis*," or sweating-house, and they are still well known in the northern parts of Ireland. They were built entirely of stone, and were five feet to seven feet long inside, with a very low door through which to creep, and were always placed remote from habitations.

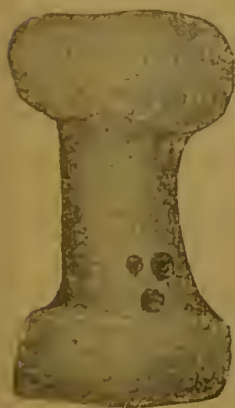
The Celtic sweating-house

They were generally built near a pool of water some four or five feet deep. When they were to be used a great fire of turf was kindled inside until the house became like an oven, after which the ashes were swept out, and the patient, wrapping himself in a blanket, crept in and sat down, when the door was closed. He was supposed to remain there until profuse perspiration was produced, and immediately on emerging he plunged into the cold water, after which he was well rubbed until a warm glow was obtained.

As in the Highlands of Scotland, "healing stones" were preserved in several places, and were used for curative purposes.

"Healing stones"

A stone of this kind has been preserved in the family of the Fitzgeralds from a period of great antiquity. It is sometimes called the "*clock-omra*" or murrain stone. It was used as a cure for murrain in cattle, and for hydrophobia. A similar talisman is preserved in the family of MacCarthy, and in a church near Buckross another healing stone exists to which the sick are brought



THE IRISH HEALING-STONE near Truckless in Lonsdal

on account of its curative properties. Richardson, in his "*Folly of Pilgrimage*," speaks of a wooden image

of a woman, carved and painted, which was kept in the house of the O'Herbecbys, and was sent for by the sick of the locality as a means of cure, and to which offerings of sheep were sometimes sacrificed with peculiar ceremonics. Another early chronicler makes mention of certain antient "brash" or "bullan" stones, which were large stones with holes upon the surface, into the larger of which, when water had accumulated, persons suffering from rheumatism would place their knees, dropping at the same time an offering into one of the smaller holes. This ceremony, together



A CONACH of silver, ornamented with azure and amber-coloured crystals used as a charm to ward off plague and diseases of cattle

with certain washings at an adjacent well, were deemed a specific for rheumatic pains. The water found in these holes was also believed to be efficacious for eye ailments.

As already stated, hospitals or houses for the treatment of the sick and wounded have been known in Ireland from a period of great antiquity.

Before the monastic period the physician's house was the hospital for the district in which he lived. Besides this, there were other hospitals for the use of the people of the tuath or district, which were called "forus tuaithe," "the house of the territory," which came directly under the Brchon laws. Patients

Early  
hospitals

who were able to pay for their food, medicine, and the services of the physicians, were expected to do so.

If a person wounded another or injured him in any way without justification, he or his relations were obliged to pay for "sick maintenance," and the injured one might either go to a hospital, or be treated at home. If he went to a hospital his mother was deputed to go with him, and her support was also defrayed by the aggressor. Another curious, but very necessary, regulation was, that the "dogs, fools and female scolds" were to be kept away lest the patient should be worried.



CELTIC HARPER

From a carving of the X century





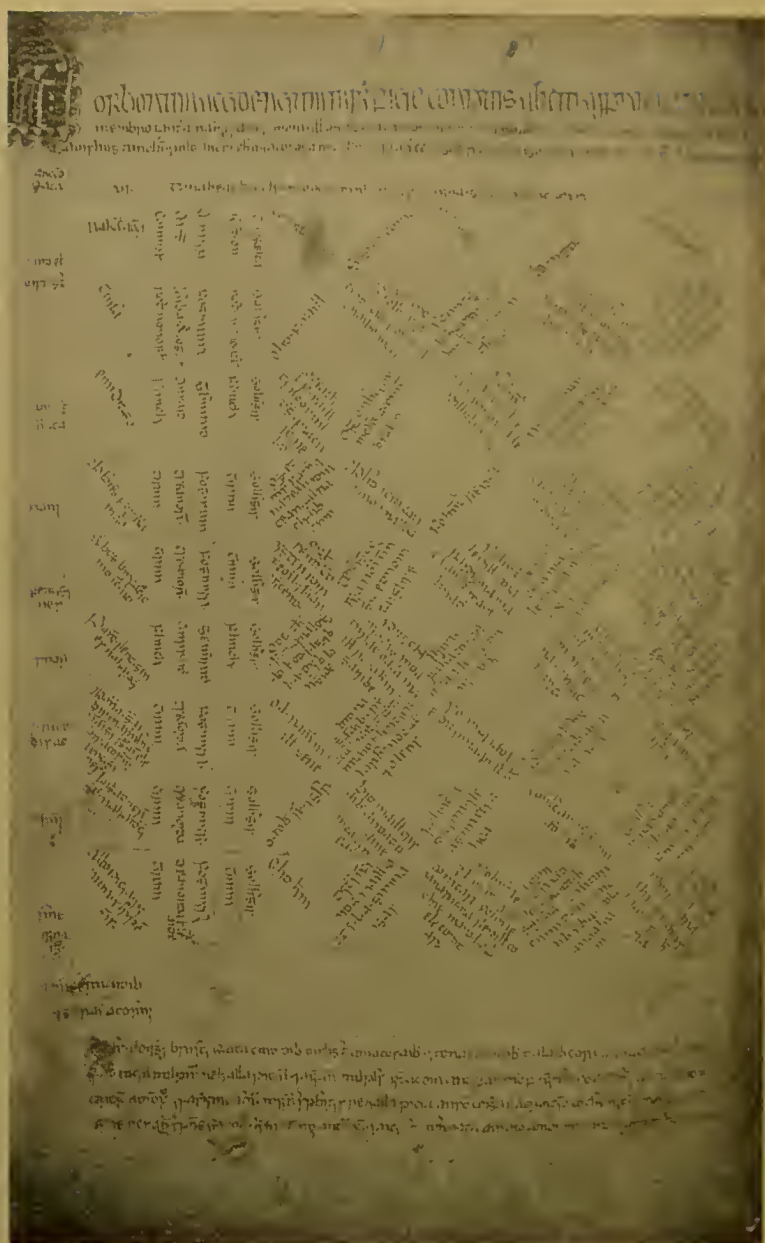
ANTIEN T IRISH MEDICAL MANUSCRIPTS

Many manuscripts, written in the early Irish language on medicine and the healing of disease, are still in existence. Probably the earliest of these was discovered in the Convent of St. Gall, in Switzerland, some years ago, and is stated to go back to the eighth century. It consists of several prayers, charms and incantations for various diseases. One is for *galar fuail*, diseases of the urine, another for long life, and another for headache. This last is not addressed to any special saint. It invokes "the eye of Isaia, the tongue of Solomon, the mind of Benjamin, the heart of Paul, the faith of Abraham," etc., ending with "Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth," to which this direction in Irish is added. "Say this thing every day for thy head against headache; after repeating it, place thy spittle upon thy palm and put it on thy temples, and at the back of thy head, and say the Pater thrice thereupon, and draw a cross with thy spittle on the top of thy head; and on thy head also draw the form of the letter U."

Another, said to be of the tenth century, which reads somewhat like an advertisement for a modern quack medicine, begins: "A preservation for the dead, the living, for the want of sinews, for the tongue-tied, for swelling in the head, of wounds from iron, of burning from fire, of the bite of the hound; it preventeth the lassitude of old age, cures the decline, the rupture of the blood vessels, takes away the virulence of the festering sore, the poignancy of grief, the fever of the blood—they cannot contend with it—he to whom it shall be applied shall be made whole. Extolled be the Elixir of Life bequeathed by Diancecht to his people, by which everything to which it is applied is made whole."

Early  
Irish  
medical  
MSS.

In an early Irish MS. called "Medicina Antiqua," the writer begins: "The age of the Lord when this book was made was a thousand years and three



A PAGE FROM THE "BOOK OF THE O'LEES"

A manuscript on medicine, written A.D. 1443

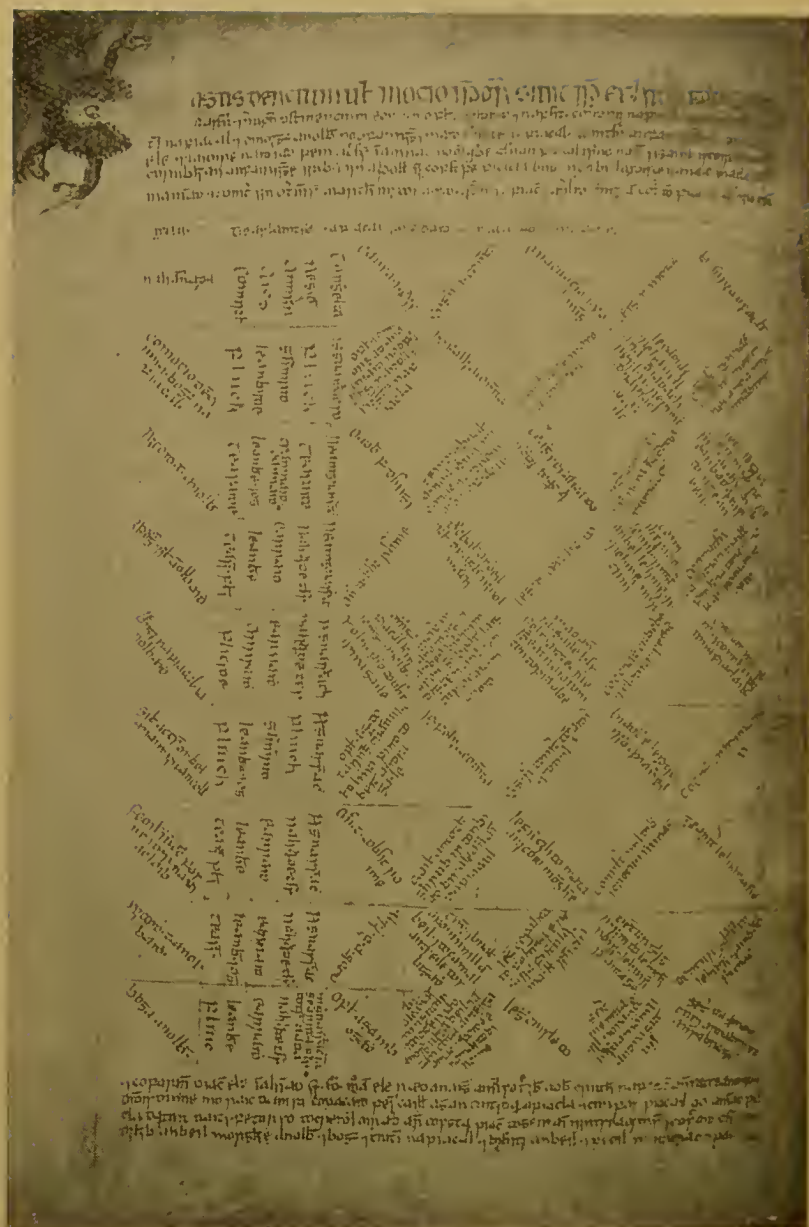
hundred years and twice twenty years and twelve years more. The book was finished in the year that Shane Oge, the son of Cu-Aithne, was killed, and it was written in the house of the son of Dermod O'Meagher." Continuing, the writer states: "These things are gentle, sweet, profitable, of little evil, which have often been tested by us and by our instructors. And I pray God for those to whom this will come, and I lay it on as a load and an injunction on their souls that they extract not poorly, and that they fail not for want of the practical rules, and particularly if they gain nothing by it regularly (or devoutly). I implore every doctor at the beginning of the work (of curing) that he remember the Father of Health (God) that the work be finished prosperously; and let him not be in mortal sin, and let him beseech the patient not to be so either. And let him implore the Heavenly Father who is the Physician and the Balsam-Giver above all, for the diseased, to end his work prosperously, and to save him from shame and discredit at that time."

The acquaintance of the early Irish medical writers with Greek and other classical medical literature is proved by there being discovered several versions of the works of Hippocrates and Galen, written as early as the eighth century.

Classical knowledge possessed by early Irish physicians

The books of the hereditary physicians, which were handed down from father to son, contained the learning and experience of the antients, in the form of recipes, and cures for almost every imaginable disease. The manner in which these books were generally compiled, and the motives of the compilers, may be gathered by the perusal of the preface of one written in the year 1352, which begins: "May the merciful God have mercy on us all. I have here collected practical rules from several works, for the honour of God, for the benefit of the Irish people, and for the love of my friends and of my kindred. I have translated them from Latin

The books of the hereditary physicians



A PAGE FROM THE "BOOK OF THE O'LEES"

A manuscript on medicine, written A.D. 1443

into Gaelic from the authority of Galen, in the last book of his 'Practical Panteon,' and from the book of the 'Prognostics of Hippocrates.' These are things gentle, sweet, profitable, and of little evil, things which have been often tested by us and by our instructors. I pray God to bless those doctors who will use this book; and I lay it on their souls as a conjuration, that they extract not sparingly from it; that they fail not on account of neglecting the practical rules herein contained; and more especially that they do their duty in cases where they receive no pay on account of the poverty of the patients. I implore every doctor, that before he begins his treatment, he prays God, the Father of Healing, to the end that his work may be finished prosperously. Moreover, let him not be in mortal sin; and let him implore the patient to be also free from grievous sin. Let him offer up a second prayer for the sick person, and implore the Heavenly Father, the Physician and Balm-Giver for all mankind, to prosper the work he is entering upon and to save him from the shame and disgrace of failure."

The book of the O'Hickeys, commonly known as the "Lily of Medicine," is a translation of Gordon's "*Lilium Medicinæ*," written about 1303. The book of the O'Lees is a large-sized vellum MS. written in 1443, partly in Latin and partly in Irish. The pages are curiously ruled and divided, so that the writing forms patterns resembling astrological figures. It is a complete system of medicine, treating among other things, of putrid fevers: of abscesses and pustules; of wounds, poisons and hydrophobia; of affections of the brain and other parts; of the period of life and the time of year when certain diseases usually come on; and of the temperature or "cardinal point" that influences them.

The book  
of the  
O'Hickeys

The book of the O'Shiels, which was transcribed in 1657, from some MS. of unknown date not now in existence, consists partly of translations and partly of dissertations on the medical properties of herbs.

The book  
of the  
O'Shiels



Circulus ampulla. zina  
nubecula. spugna. pus. pruritus  
edo. cruentus humor. sanguis  
reka. pilus. purpur. erythema  
squama. Acrom. Sperma. cinis  
serigera

Primo incipit incipit est a capite. i. zionitum  
f. z. con. e. o. an. ap. t. v. s. e. t. w. p. e. t. p. p. p.  
w. corp. b. an. f. 7 w. b. e. t. p. e. s. i. o. n. y. x. p. u. s. i. u. e. n.  
1. p. p. t. an. c. p. u. s. i. u. e. n. e. e. p. u. s. i. u. e. n. y. t. i. n. s. p. u. s. i. u. e. n. y.  
7 p. p. t. p. o. n. d. u. t. 7 p. p. t. u. m. i. n. d. u. t. p. p. t. p. i. s. p. i. p. u. n.  
2. p. p. t. u. e. an. e. i. n. f. n. u. s. o. p. t. e. n. s. o. l. f. an. 2. p. u. s.  
1. e. t. t. i. n. s. p. u. s. i. u. e. n. y. 7 u. p. o. u. t. p. p. t. p. i. s. p. i. p. u. n.  
3. o. p. t. e. n. s. an. e. i. n. f. n. u. s. o. p. t. e. n. s. f. d. an. 3.  
p. u. s. i. u. e. n. y. d. u. m. b. i. u. t. u. n. u. p. u. s. i. u. e. n. y. 7 u. p. o. u. t. an. l. u. a.  
1. s. t. p. i. s. l. y. e. l. o. an. e. i. n. f. n. u. s. o. p. t. e. n. s. o. i. o. n. t. u. p. h.  
4. d. an. 4. p. u. s. i. u. e. n. y. d. u. m. b. i. u. u. p. u. s. i. u. e. n. y. t. u. n. u. 7  
d. u. t. p. u. s. i. u. e. n. y. l. y. e. l. o. an. e. i. n. f. n. u. s. o. p. t. e. n. s. o.  
5. e. i. o. n. t. e. l. p. an. 5. p. d. u. m. b. i. u. u. p. o. u. t. l. u. a. i. s. t. e. p. i.  
n. o. p. h.

A PAGE FROM THE "BOOK OF THE O'SHIELS"  
A manuscript on medicine, written A.D. 1657

The book of MacAnlega was transcribed in 1512, by Melaghlin MacAnlega (whose name means "son of the physician"), from an older book lent him by one of the O'Muleonrys. It is a commentary on antient classical writers on medicine.

The  
book of  
MacAnlega

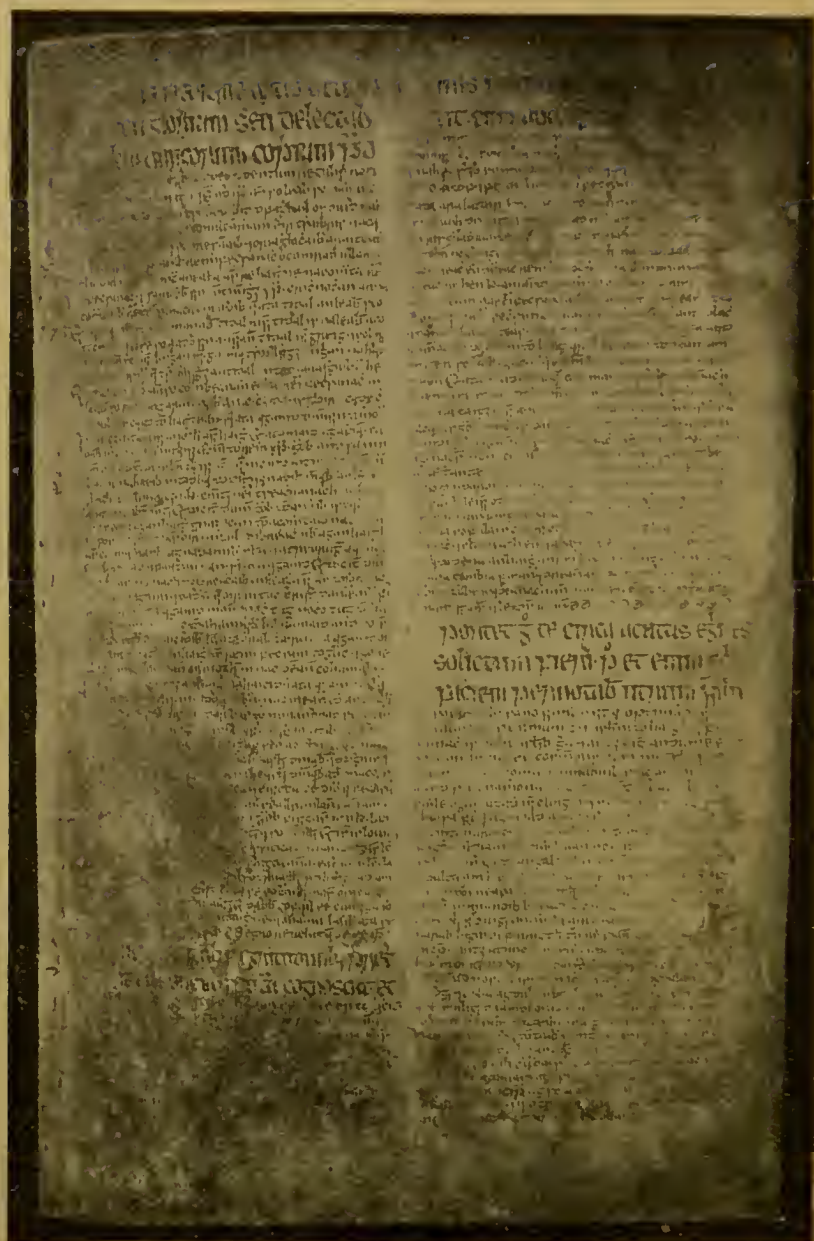
The following curious recipes, culled from a Celtic MS., give some idea of the materia medica of the fourteenth century:—

"For baldness. Let calcine a raven, his ashes boil in sheep's suet, and rub to the head, and it cures. Item. With mice fill an earthen pipkin, stop the mouth with a lump of clay and bury beside a fire, but so as the fire's too great heat reach it not. So be it left for a year, and at a year's end take out whatsoever may be found therein. But it is urgent that he who shall lift it have a glove upon his hand, lest at his fingers' ends the hair come sprouting out."

Curious  
Celtic  
recipes

"For paralysis. Take a fox with his pelt and with his inwards, boil him well till he part from his bones, and the patient's body being first well-scoured, bathe the limbs or even the whole person in his broo."

"For falling sickness," says another antient Celtic MS. recipe, "put salt and white snails into a vessel for three nights, add seven woodbine leaves, mix to a paste and poultice for nine days." A plaster of mandragore and ground ivy laid upon the head is also prescribed, "if the patient sleeps will do well, if not will not." "Pour wine on one hemlock freshly gathered, and drink while in the fit," is another recommendation. For dysentery, woodbine and maiden-hair are prescribed, boiled in new milk with oatmeal, to be taken three times a day. For liver trouble leaves of plantain are advised, with wild sage, shamrock and doekleaf, with valerian and the flower of the daisy, to be plucked by the person before sunrise, and fasting, on Monday or Wednesday, whilst saying a "Hail Mary" and a "Paternoster." The ingredients



A PAGE FROM A MANUSCRIPT ON MEDICINE

Written in antient Irish in the XV century

should be boiled and strained, and a glassful of the liquor taken twice a day, the residue of the herbs being carefully burnt. For lumbago, dog-fern roots were used, with shamrock well cleaned and powdered and mixed with butter made on May-day morning, with holy salt, into a paste to be rubbed into the back, the Lord's Prayer and a "Hail Mary" being said, the paste not to be washed off, but to be left on "till cured." "Danes'leure" is mentioned for sore eyes, and there is ample evidence amongst the old



Antient Irish amulets of gold and stone

MS. prescriptions that mesmerism and "cures by the waving of the hands without contact, and also by stroking," were practised in Ireland from druidical times.

When a leech could do no more, and death claimed its victim, the medical attendant was always ready to take part in the "kcens" or lamentations for the dead, which formed so characteristic a feature of an Irish funeral.

A characteristic custom

As might be expected, magic and charms entered very largely into the popular medical treatment amongst the Irish peasantry, many of these charms having been handed down from time immemorial, and are still used in the country places to-day.

Magic and charms

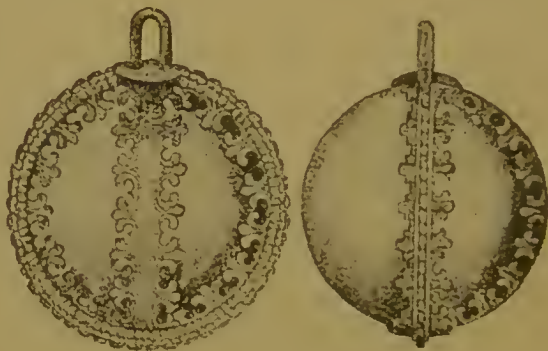
For toothache, an old Irish charm was as follows:—

Celtic  
charm  
for  
toothache

“May the thumb of chosen Thomas in the side of guileless Christ heal my teeth without lamentation from worms and from pangs.”

Prudent cattle dealers were given certain mystical sticks cut from the mountain ash, to cure diseases and increase fecundity. Magic ointment was prepared, which was affirmed to render the user invisible and to reveal things previously unseen.

Saliva was regarded as efficacious against hostile spells and the diseases occasioned by them. Few



THE GARNAVILLA AMULET

Consisting of a crystal ball in a bronze mount. When hung round the neck of an animal, whilst feeding, it was believed to prevent disease.

Irish peasants will conclude a bargain without first spitting on their hands to ensure good luck. Piers, in

his “Account of West Meath,” states that the power of curing burns was supposed to exist in the saliva of certain persons, who acquired the virtue by drawing a lizard, found in West Meath, across their tongue in a direction contrary to the scales of the reptile.

Many other charms of a similar curious nature might be cited if space but permitted.



# ST. PATRICK

St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, is said to have been the son of a deacon named Calparnius, and was born in Dumbarton, in Scotland. He was sold as a slave to Milchu, a chief living close to the spot where Ballymena now stands, and there he lived as a shepherd for six years or more. At length he escaped to France, and studied under the guidance of St. Merin, Bishop of Tours, and eventually became a bishop. In the year 432 he is said to have undertaken a mission to Ireland, and first landed near the town of Wicklow, but ultimately travelled to Strangford Lough in county Down, where he founded the first church.

Incidents  
in his life

St. Patrick is said to have worked many miracles of healing, including that of curing the lepers, that came to him. Tradition states he banished all the snakes and poisonous reptiles from Irish soil, and, in proof of this, every true son of Erin will confirm the fact that there are no snakes to be found in the Emerald Isle to-day. St. Patrick is frequently represented as trampling the snakes under his feet.

Legendary lore also connects St. Patrick with the shamrock emblem of Ireland. It is said that, when preaching one day of the Trinity, he found it very difficult to make the doctrine clear, until spying a tiny three-leafed shamrock growing on the emerald turf at his feet, he gathered it, explaining to his listeners that, as there were three distinct leaflets composing the leaf, so there were three distinct persons composing the Trinity. Ever since, the shamrock has been the national emblem of Ireland, and for centuries has been worn by Irishmen on March 17, the anniversary of St. Patrick.

St. Patrick  
and the  
shamrock

There is another legend that he was once given a cup of poisoned ale by a jealous Druid, who secretly



S. PATRICIUS HIBERNIÆ APOSTOLVS  
 Claruit Anno Domini CCCCLVIII.  
*T. Maffingham fecit*

ST. PATRICK  
 From an engraving of the XVII century

wished to compass his death, but St. Patrick made the sign of the cross, and repeated the following incantation:—

“Tuba fis fri ibu, fis ibu anfis,  
Fis bru uatha, ibu lithu, Christi Jesus.”

on which, the poison in the ale froze to solid ice. He then inverted the cup and the poison fell out. He then turned the cup up again, and drank off the now harmless ale.

### THE SHAMROCK

“Oh! the bonny verdant land,  
Where the shamrock grows!  
Oh! the light on every hand  
Where the shamrock grows!  
Love and faith and truth combine,  
Nourished by a cure divine,  
Where the shamrock grows!”

The Celtic-Irish, like the antient Britons and the Anglo-Saxons, were acquainted with many useful local herbs, and amongst these was that

“Chosen leaf of bard and chief,  
Old Erin's native shamrock.”

Antient bards state it was an object of worship with the Tuatha De Danaans.

Curiously enough, no one can say with certainty the exact plant to which the name of shamrock was applied. The word *seamarog* in Erse, or shamrock, means “little trefoil,” and is applied to various trefoils by the Erse and Gaelic writers, although antient herbalists only mention the sour variety by that name. The plants now worn as the Irish emblem on St. Patrick's day are the Black Nonsuch (*Medicago lupulina*) and the Dutch Clover (*Trifolium repens*). The wood sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*) which is indigenous to Ireland, is the plant called “shainrog” in the old herbals,



ST. BRIDGET  
From an MS. of the XIV century



and one early chronicler states it was a sour plant and caten by the Irish. Spenser says: "If they found a plot of watercresses or shamrocks, there they flocked as to a feast."

And Wyther wrote: "And feed on shamrocks as the Irish doe." Beyond these statements, there is no reliable evidence to show which was the actual trefoil plucked by St. Patrick.



THE MAGIC TREFOIL  
From an MSS. of the XIV century

Anglico introduced the white clover into his representation of the Crucifixion and other pictures, "with a view," as Ruskin thinks, "to its chemical character."

That the shamrock was employed in medicine in antient times is evidenced by the early Irish MSS. Other MSS. mention its properties as an anodyne, both in Ireland and Scotland, women having been observed gathering it for that purpose in the latter country as late as 1794. The fame of the trefoil, however, is by no means confined to these two countries. Pliny mentions it as being efficacious in "curing bites from venomous beasts." It has been depicted as the three-leaf wand of Hermes, the triple oracle of the antients, and the trifoliated sceptre of Triphyllian Jove. It is frequently shown on heads of Isis, Osiris, and also of a Mexican deity. It may be recognised on the crown of Persia; a relic from Nineveh also presents an illustration of two sacred hares engaged in devouring it; so it has probably been used as a symbol from a period of great antiquity.



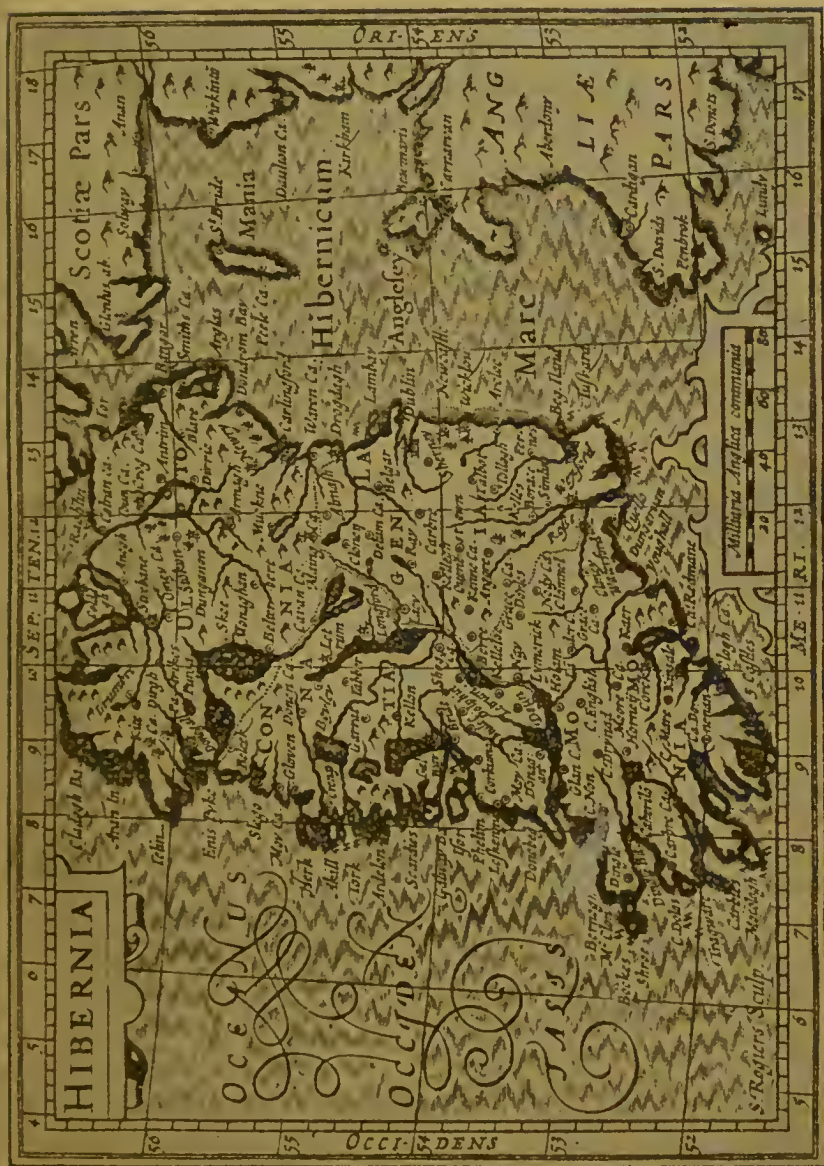
Many superstitions are connected with the shamrock, and are still believed in some parts of Ireland. If a farmer should gather a piece of shainroek and earry it home, it will go well with his eattle on May Day. The colleen who puts a sprig in the shoe of her lover unknown to him when he starts on a journey, may



THE HERBE CALLED OXYS OR WODSORELL  
From a woodcut of the XVI century

make sure of his return to her again. Carried on the person it is supposed to detect the presence of evil spirits, and, when gathered with a gloved hand and carried secretly into a house in which an insane person resides, it is said to effect a eure of the afflicted one.

# MAPS OF ANTIENT ERIN



MAP OF IRELAND IN 1610



MAP OF IRE



OCCIDENTALIS



HIBERNIÆ

IRELAND *Analys.* YVERDON

BRITANNIS ERIN *in*clis. IERNA

Sophre & Mistr. IRIS Diedere Sualo ~

PARS SCOTIÆ

